

I am the organizer of a group located in Orlando Florida called Orlando For Change. We are very unhappy with the situation of radio and mass media more generally here in Orlando and your upcoming ruling on Low Power FM is either part of a solution to our problem or will be part of the problem itself depending on how you vote.

Although Orlando and Orange County Florida actually went for John Kerry in the last Presidential election you would never know it by the radio landscape here in Orlando.

We (Orlando For Change) have as one of our primary goals trying to get a local affiliate to pick up Air America radio or another liberal programming source such as Democracy Now, or Pacifica Radio.

There is only one moderate to liberal talk program on radio here in Orlando called the Phillips File on FM 104.1 for three hours a day and a few hours of moderate talk and news programs on the local National Public Radio affiliate WMFE.

The Public Radio affiliate is in jeopardy of being hijacked by the Republican party too as they have put a Republican in to the top job at NPR with orders to remake it in George Bush's image.

Why is it if we actually have more Democrats than Republicans here in Orlando that we can't even get one radio station that will carry Air America or Pacifica Radio or Democracy Now or any other liberal or even moderate content?

Why must I SUBSCRIBE and PAY XM digital radio in order to get content which is clearly lacking and clearly supported by a majority of the citizens in my community and which therefore should be available for free?

Why are we bombarded by an onslaught of right wing talk shows both from national syndication like Rush Limbaugh, Sean Hannity, Michael Savage, and others, and the local home brewed variety?

Why is talk radio here in Orlando such a right wing wasteland?

The answer to all of these questions is:

Because of the unchecked corporate consolidation of the media.

This was allowed to occur after the dropping of the fairness doctrine under Reagan and the passing of the 1996 TCA under Clinton and the lax enforcement against monopolies under George W. Bush.

This has allowed large chains of radio stations (hundreds and even thousands of stations) to be accumulated by right wing corporate entities with no ties to the local community. Clear Channel is the best known example of this phenomena but there are others.

This isn't just about political free speech on the radio but that is the most important reason the FCC should do something.

This corporatization and homogenization of radio is also affecting the music we must listen to on the radio. No longer do the listeners get to decide what is played through requests and dedications but now it is being done by record company executives who make deals with radio station chain owners as to what we can and cannot listen to on the radio.

The best example of this is what happened to the Dixie Chicks on country radio stations owned by Clear Channel after they criticized President Bush for the war in Iraq. The Dixie Chicks were banned and being "Dixie Chicked" is now a verb describing being black-listed from the music industry.

It is not just about political speech or political music however, it is most often about simple good old fashioned music payola of the kind the government used to prosecute under anti-trust laws but doesn't seem to care about anymore.

The goal should be MORE owners not less, MORE LOCAL owners and fewer national owners, MORE diversity of ownership - (black / white, male / female, liberal / conservative) , EASIER startup cost and EASIER access for new would be local radio station owners.

This will serve the American public better by providing more points of view, more freedom of expression, more competition, and radio stations that are more responsive to their listening audience from whom they are borrowing

the airwaves that they use.

To this end locally owned and operated low Power FM and new small AM stations and also, soon, terrestrial digitally modulated radio stations should be encouraged and nurtured by the FCC.

Instead it seems that the FCC is set to squash these types of stations in order to protect the monopolistic radio empires set up by corporations such as Clear Channel in order to satisfy corporate contributors and lobbyists that donated to powerful Republican Congressmen and Senators, and the President.

The FCC should make every effort to protect low power FM (LPFM) and the community-oriented content it provides. Unlike the consolidated commercial radio landscape, LPFM stations provide quality local programming and enhance the diversity of local voices available to their communities.

Full power stations should not be allowed to cut into the coverage area of LPFM stations and knock them off the air. The FCC should adopt a policy that denies a full power station's modification application if granting the application would reduce the coverage area available to LPFM stations.

LPFM stations also should be afforded higher priority than translators. Translators only repeat programming, sometimes from hundreds of miles away. Every new translator takes the place of a potential LPFM station that would provide original local programming. The FCC should give locally controlled and operated LPFM station applications precedence over translator applications.

The FCC should consider the circumstances under which low power stations operate when determining the rules for their licensing. For LPFM service to be more accessible to community groups, the FCC should modify its rules so that typical changes on a non-profit board would be permissible under FCC rules. Similarly, the FCC should allow low power stations a greater amount of time to construct stations and to shift ownership.

The FCC has the responsibility to protect the service of low power radio and nurture its growth. Congress is considering legislation to expand the service by removing the restrictions on the third-adjacent channel, which could allow

LPFM to expand into larger communities. The FCC should take every opportunity to tell Congress that the technological landscape is ready for this change.